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ABSTRACT

The need to teach student teachers to be reflective in solving problems and planning teaching events has led to an interest in developing appropriate data collection procedures for interns learning to perform self-evaluations. A study of 15 undergraduate student teachers was conducted to determine the extent to which they could perform unaided recall of deviation from their planned lessons. Deviations were categorized in terms of aided or unaided recall, sources of deviation, and causes of deviation. Results indicated that these student teachers remembered an average of only 42% of their deviations, and remembered less than 35% of deviations initiated by their students. Causes of deviation included clarification (54%), discipline (19%), scheduling (13%), and other (14%). These results indicate that stimulated recall must be a part of the self-study techniques taught to student teachers, if they are to have a full and accurate record of their experiences to reflect upon. Two tables and one figure are included. One appendix contains a sample record. (Contains 11 references.) (Author)

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Creating the Reflective Practitioner: Sources and Causes of Student Teacher Deviation from Planned Lessons

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Abstract

The need to teach student teachers to be reflective in solving problems and planning teaching events has led to an interest in developing appropriate data collection procedures for interns learning to perform self-study. A study of 15 undergraduate student teachers was conducted to determine the extent to which they could perform unaided recall of deviation from their planned lessons. Deviations were categorized in terms of aided or unaided recall, sources of deviation, and causes of deviation. Results indicated that these student teachers remembered an average of only 42% of their deviations, and remembered less than 35% of deviations initiated by their students. Causes of deviation included clarification (54%), discipline (19%), scheduling (13%), and other (14%). These results indicate that stimulated recall must be a part of the self-study techniques taught to student teachers, if they are to have a full and accurate record of their experiences to reflect upon.

Creating the Reflective Practitioner: Sources and Causes of Student Teacher Deviation from Planned Lessons

The need to teach student teachers to be reflective in solving problems and planning teaching events has led to an interest in developing appropriate data collection procedures for interns learning to perform self-study. Wilson, Shulman, and Richert (1987) define reflection as the process of learning from experience. They say that the reflective teacher must reconstruct the events, emotions, and accomplishments of a teaching experience. Barell's (1991) reflective teacher is one who monitors his or her own teaching decisions when designing learning environments.

Marleen C. Pugach (1990) conducted a study to explore the usefulness of self-study as a way of instilling in student teachers the concepts and techniques of reflective practice. In her study, student teachers were required to identify problematical aspects of their own teaching, then attempt to devise and implement solutions to these problems. These student teachers thus gained experience in reflection within the context of their own classrooms. Pugach concluded that "Focused self-study on specific teaching practices may play an important role in the early acquisition of the disposition to be reflective about teaching and learning." (p. 22) Cutler, Cook, and Young (1989) also identified, as a crucial part of empowering preservice teachers as reflective practitioners, the importance

of a teacher's examination of his or her own classroom experience, in terms of behavior, practices, and other such facets. According to them, the basic and comprehensive question to be asked during reflection is "What am I doing, and why?" (p. 1) In another study addressing the same issue, Ross (1990) advocated a reflective process whereby a teacher selects a classroom problem to be studied, then collects and analyzes his or her own data in order to arrive at a possible solution.

If student teachers are to reflect on and learn from their experiences, they must have an accurate picture of what actually took place. This study is concerned with that particular aspect of self-study. Can the classroom events be recalled without some form of stimulated recall techniques? Without this awareness of classroom events, the teacher cannot hope to accurately identify those teaching events that constitute good practices to be retained and those that need to be modified or eliminated. Calderhead (1981), Clark and Peterson (1981), Freiberg and Waxman (1990), and Westerman (1991) all addressed the important issue of how teachers can best recall classroom events, and all advocated some form of stimulated recall. They variously suggested the use of video tapes or audio tapes, making a full and accurate record of events available for reflection.

This study was designed to address three questions. First, do student teachers accurately recall their classroom teaching events? Second, what is the nature of these events, specifically in terms of deviations from a planned lesson? And third, what

are the possible implications applicable to the design of a program for teaching reflective practice to student teachers? As figure 1 illustrates, these questions are meant to be considered within the context of the structure suggested by Pugach (1990). In her outline, student teachers should be taught to be self-monitoring, an activity that is appropriate to preparing them to be lifetime reflective practitioners. In this study, stimulated recall will be considered as an indispensable part of self-study.

Method

Subjects

Fifteen student teachers, all of them undergraduates at one of two Southeastern public universities, served as the subjects of this study. All were seeking elementary or secondary education baccalaureate degrees and certification and all were under 25 years of age.

Materials

The appendix is a representation of the instrument devised for this study. It permits the tabulation of deviations from a planned lesson, in terms of whether or not the student teacher could recall the deviations unaided or aided, the source of these deviations, and their nature. This instrument was validated (tested and revised) in a pilot study (Harris, Harris, and Wear, 1992) and checked for reliability in a second study (Harris and Wear, 1992).

Design and Procedure

This study was designed to address one particular aspect of

self-study by student teachers; namely, that of full and accurate recall of teaching events. The data collection instrument was accompanied by a detailed set of instructions. To avoid contamination of the data, the materials for each stage of data collection were given to the participants only when actually needed.

In Stage One, the participants were directed to make an audio tape of themselves teaching a lesson for which they had prepared detailed lesson plans. They were not yet aware of how the audio tape would be used. In Stage Two, they wrote a detailed journal of all they could remember of the just-completed teaching experience; they were not allowed to refer to the tape or their lesson plans while completing the journal. During Stage Three, they used their journal, audio tape, and lesson plan to make entries on the data sheets, noting details of each deviation from their lesson plan. Following the data collection, the researchers debriefed the subjects, so that they could reflect on their own teaching experience.

Results

Analysis of the data presented in Table 1 showed that, without the aid of stimulated recall, the subjects averaged 42% recall of their deviations from their lesson plans. The range of recall data was quite broad; one intern could recall only 15% of his or her deviations, while another recalled 83%. A matched-pair t-test of the 15 subjects was performed, comparing the unaided recall deviations to the total deviations. The

difference was found to be significant at better than the .001 level. Analysis of sources of deviation data revealed that there were an equal number of deviations attributable to teachers and to students, but the teachers were likely to remember their deviations 50.6% of the time, while remembering student-initiated deviations only 34.7% of the time.

Table 2 presents data related to the cause of deviation. "Clarification" data include unplanned explanations and answers to questions. "Discipline" refers to interruptions requiring some sort of disciplinary action. "Scheduling" refers to changes in the planned sequence of events, usually initiated by the teacher. "Other" deviations include intercom announcements or visitors to the classroom. As Table 2 shows, 54% of the deviations were for the purpose of clarification.

Discussion

Deviations occur in lesson plans for different reasons. Not only do teachers need to know that deviations occur, but more importantly they need to know what happened and why. Use of stimulated recall provided these student teachers with an opportunity to be reflective, recalling significant aspects of their teaching experience that would otherwise have been forgotten. On the average, these subjects remembered less than half of the deviations from their lesson plans, and they remembered less than 35% of the student-initiated deviations. With the aid of stimulated recall, important data about the causes of deviation are more likely to be available to the

teacher. In this study, the results showed that more than half of the deviations were of the "Clarification" category. In many instances, these deviations were probably of the sort that, upon reflection, the teacher would choose to incorporate into a revision of his or her lesson plan. On the other hand, clarification deviations may indicate a problem in creating a well organized lesson plan. Other categories of deviations could also result in reflective decision-making about future lessons.

In conclusion, the results indicate that student teachers cannot on the average depend on the unaided recall of their teaching experiences to provide them with the baseline data necessary for reflective decision making about future lessons. Use of self-monitoring with inexpensive, convenient, and unobtrusive audio recording equipment can provide them with a far more accurate record of what happened in their classroom.

Implications for Further Research

This study limited each subject to only one data gathering experience. If self-monitoring can actually teach someone to be more aware of classroom events, then improvement on the ability to recall these events without the aid of a recall method should be indicated with successive data gathering experiences. The researchers feel that a longitudinal study to explore the long term benefit of these activities as a means of training student teachers to be reflective practitioners would be beneficial in the planning of teacher training programs.

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Appendix

Sample Record of Deviations Form

U=Unaided A=Aided	Initiated By: T=Teacher S=Student O=Other	Nature of Deviation: question, comment, change, sequence, etc.	Reason for Deviation: clarification, involvement, unintended, etc.
U, A	T	Question to class	Clarify difficult idea, create involvement
U, A	O	Intercom Announcement	Announce pep rally
A	T	Change sequence of lesson	Unintended; distracted by visitor
A	S (3 or 4)	Comments on Lesson	Controversy
A	S	Question	Seeking Clarification

Table 1

Aided vs. Unaided Recall of Lesson Deviations by Student Teachers

	Deviations Recalled:		
	Unaided	Aided	Total Number of Deviations
#1	8	15	23
#2	5	4	9
#3	4	22	26
#4	2	8	10
#5	4	6	10
#6	9	7	16
#7	5	3	8
#8	7	3	10
#9	5	1	6
#10	1	1	2
#11	4	7	11
#12	9	14	23
#13	2	5	7
#14	3	5	8
#15	5	1	6
Totals	73	102	175
	42%	58%	100%

Table 2

Causes of Deviation from Lesson

	Clarification	Discipline	Scheduling	Other	Total
#1	5	9	4	5	23
#2	4		4	1	9
#3	17	2	1	6	26
#4	6		2	2	10
#5	5		4	1	10
#6	6	4		6	16
#7	6	2			8
#8	1	7	2		10
#9	3	3			6
#10	1			1	2
#11	6	2	1	2	11
#12	22	1			23
#13	2	1	4		7
#14	7		1		8
#15	3	3			6
	94	34	23	24	175
	54%	19%	13%	14%	100%

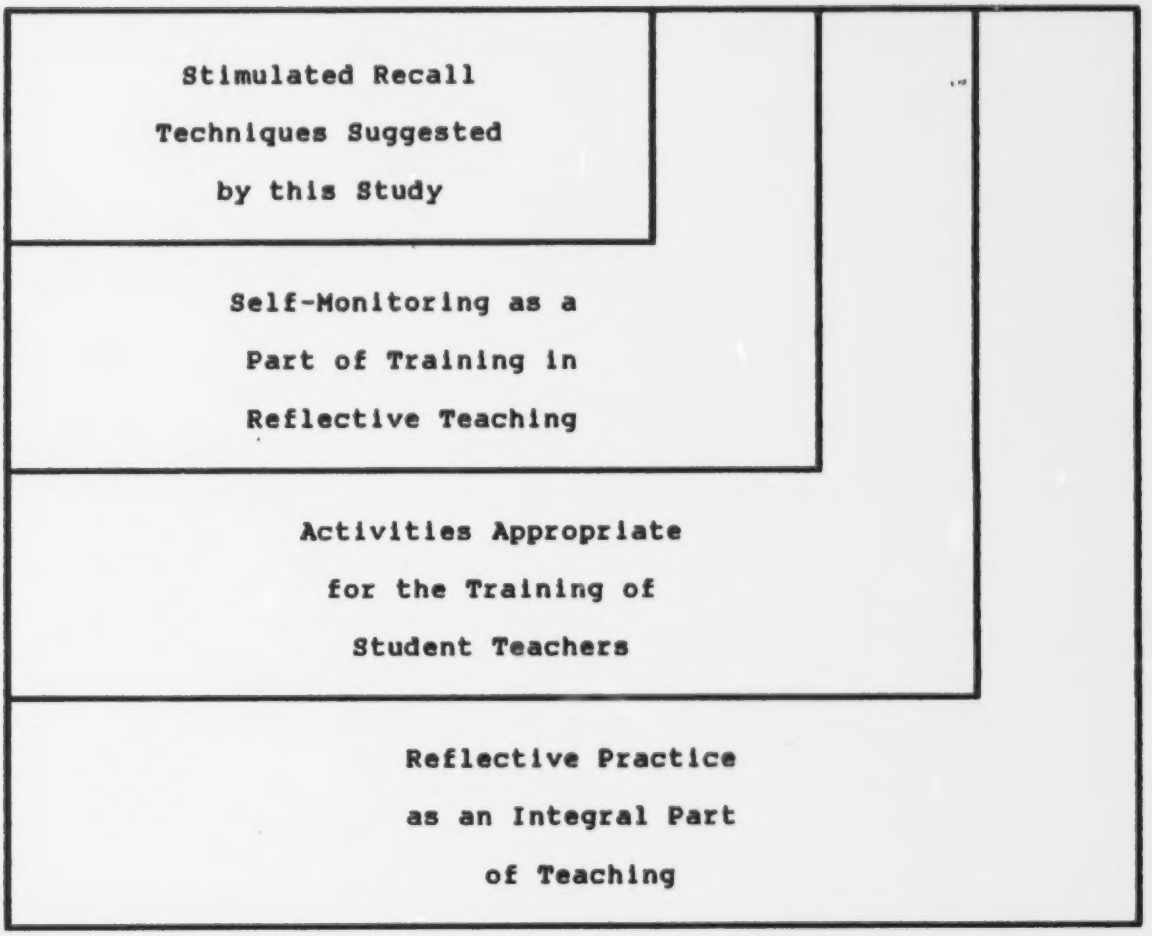

Figure 1. Relationship of this Study to the Goal of Teaching Student Teachers to be Reflective Practitioners